

THE HILLANDALE NEWS

(1)

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13 & 14

JUNE - AUGUST 1963

Acting - Editor's Note

Although I am ready to help our Society in this way, I am very sorry that I am doing so only because our Secretary, Bob Wormald lies very unwell in hospital. Our Country Members will not know that Bob has been ill for over two months, during which time there have been occasions when it was a fight for his life. We ask you to think of him in your prayers and join in the hope that it will not be long before he is once again with us at our meetings.

Issue 13 of Hillandale News is being compiled rather hurriedly from material obtained at short notice from the writers.

Ernie Bayly

* * * * *

THUMB NAIL SKETCHES

by Tyn Phoill

No.8. Edison Blue Amberol 1650 by the Tollefsen Trio
a. Minuet (Beethoven) b. Gavotte (Gossec)

Little need be added to what is known about Ludwig von Beethoven except perhaps to note that he took the first important steps towards emotional and dramatic piano playing. His compositions covered the whole range of musical art from opera to the graceful little minuet in G major heard on this record.

Francois Joseph Gossec moved in a different circle, being much more likely to be influenced by the latin school of musical thought. He was born in Brussels in 1734 and died in Paris in 1829.

He was a great favourite among French composers and in 1784 founded the Ecole Royale de Chant which became the celebrated Conservatoire in 1795.

This little gavotte comes from the mass of chamber music which emanated from his pen. The piano, 'cello and violin of the Trio is a very suitable medium for such works.

LITTLE TICH

by Ernie Bayly

Harry Relph was born at the Blacksmith's Arms, Cudham, Sevenoaks in 1867, the youngest of seventeen children. In adult life he was about four feet high.

His first appearance was at the Rosherville Gardens, Gravesend, in 1880, to which, in summer, London paddle-boat trippers came and where Harry, sometimes "blackfaced", sang and played a tin whistle. In his younger days he also played in the public houses and like many another graduated from the small halls to the larger.

He secured his first London engagement at the Queen's, Poplar, where he was first billed as "Little Tich" - supposedly a humorous opposite to Arthur Orton, the 25 stone claimant to the Tichborne Estate. Little Tich became an idol in the Strand for some 17 years and was a favourite at the Tivoli. He appeared in such epics as "Lord Tom Noddy" (1896), or bulesquing many characters - The Senorita, the Territorial; or in Pantomime. Somewhere in his act would come a display of clever acrobatics on his long shoes, including the pair a yard long. Those who never saw him in person may someday be fortunate to see the reel of silent film saved in the National Film Archive. Overseas he had succesful tours in U.S.A., St Petersburg, Budapest, Cape Town, and more frequently in Paris and German Berlin, where he delighted the audiences by singing fluently in their own languages. He also spoke Spanish and Italian. In private life he was fond of playing the cello and even took the instrument around on his tours.

Tich's bright humour comes out in his book "Little Tich - a book of his travels and wanderings", published by Greenings, 1911. I am particularly amused by his definition of a rickshaw . . . "An Oriental cure for the gout on two wheels". Elsewhere in the East he says, "In Colombo a great crowd of children run after you artistically clothed in fresh air."

He was supreme in burlesque and when audiences were tiring of 'liens comiques' he would appear in an oversize evening dress and topper like a down-and-out swell, gaze dejectedly in the pie shop window singing, "I could do, could do, could do with a bit" ... perhaps, then while earning £300 per week he was recalling his own hungry beginning. Little Tich died in 1928.

Fortunately his good baritone voice recorded well and as a "hill & dale" enthusiast I recommend these Pathes:

8813 A risky thing to do / The gas Inspector

8968 Right, right, right / The Gamekeeper

9072 The Pirate / The Skylark

* * * * *

OBITUARY

Margarete Matzenauer died on 19th. May, 1963, at the age of 81. Her debut was as Puck in Oberon by Weber at Strasbourg in 1901. In 1914 she sang at Covent Garden, then went to New York where she remained. She had a rich and glorious contralto voice with an exceptionally musical phrasing. She retired from singing in 1930.



Perhaps you have experienced the same trouble as I in sorting out the George Crossmiths, especially when readin old books wherein each successive generation was called 'Junior' and 'Senior' in turn.

Chronologically they were : -

1. Robert George Crossmith
2. George Crossmith
3. George Crossmith, 1847 - 1912
4. George Crossmith, 1874 - 1936

The first was a noted child actor in his day but did not continue in the profession seriously in adult life.

The second George Crossmith was a reporter for 'The Times', covering the law courts but in the evenings was a popular entertainer, mostly at private functions.

The last two must most command our attention - - -

The third George Crossmith (whom we now chiefly call 'senior') began in his father's profession, assisting him, but at the age of seventeen was making his name in the evenings with his sketches at the piano and "penny readings". From 1870 - 77 he "went on tour" with his father who also deserted reporting. He wrote much of the material for their company which included the gifted Florence Marryat, daughter of Captain Marryat the author. This Crossmith married in 1873. In 1877 he became associated with Gilbert and Sullivan when he was engaged to play John Wellington Wells in 'The Sorcerer'. From then on he created such parts as Sir Joseph Porter in 'H.M.S. Pinafore', the Major-General in 'The Pirate s of Penzance' and Reginald Bunthorne in 'Patience'. When the D'Oyly Carte Company opened at the newly-built Savoy Theatre in 1881 he was the Lord Chancellor in 'Iolanthe' and 'Koko' in the 'Mikado'. Although he was a short man he had presence and a fine diction suited to the Gilbertian patter songs. His stay at the Savoy ended in 1889 when 'he Yeoman of the Guard' closed. Finding that humorous satirical recitals, in private houses and Music Halls were more lucrative, he continued in that style until he retired to Folkestone where he died a few years later. He was a capable musician and in 1892 had composed music for Gilbert's comic opera "Haste to the Wedding". If for no other reason we remember him for his song "See me dance the Polka".

The fourth in the line whom we now remember as George Crossmith Junior became famous as a portrayer of the bright man-about-town in Musical Comedy. He is mostly remembered for his composing and singing "Yip-i-addy-i-ay" in 'Our Miss Gibbs', in 1909, (which he recorded for H.M.V. and Jumbo). This was at the Gaiety Theatre with which he is most associated. His London debut was at the Criterion Theatre in 1892. After appearing in the 'Shop Girl', 1894, the first of the Gaiety Musical Comedies, he was a star. It ran for 546 performances. He was not in the next two productions, but when 'The Toreador' opened on 17th. June, 1901, he had one of the leading parts, - for 675 performances. The new Gaiety Theatre was built, and opened on 26th. October, 1903 with 'The Orchid'. Then followed 'The Spring Chicken' (1905), 'The New Aladdin' (1906), 'The Girls of Gottenberg' (1907), 'Our Miss Gibbs' with a long run of 636 performances, 'Peggy' (1911), 'The Sunshine Girl' (1912), 'The Girl on the Film' (1913), 'Tonight's the Night' (1915), 'Theodore and Co' (1916) - by which the world was introduced to the music of Ivor Novello.

(continued on page 7)

Max Miller passed from us recently at the age of 68. He was a comedian of the old genre whose career began as the 'old time' music hall was dying and who successfully bridged the gap into 'variety' and radio. His style was of the one-man-act which required immediate contact with an audience, so could not feel comfortable with television, which he mostly shunned. Although having a "reputation", much of the double-entendre existed in the minds of the audience, for much of his material did not even reach the mildly salacious. He could well command his audiences and have them in fits of laughter merely by ogling them while asking if they had noticed his beautiful eyes. Dressed in very colourful suits he was indeed "The Cheeky Chappy".

Coincidentally, just before Max's death, Pye reissued the L.P. record (Pye GGL 0195) "MAX AT THE MET" which includes an actual performance at that theatre in 1957.

It is an excellent memorial.

* * * * *

MANDREL MUSINGS

by Gerry Annand

Cast your mind back with me to the summer of 1904. If in difficulty study McQueen-Pope. The scene a first floor back window in a small house in Willesden Green. There are two small boys at the open window. Outside the metals of the Metropolitan Railway.

The Met trains were still largely handled by the 4-4-0T Beyer-Peacock engines and with their five feet nine inch driving mandrels could move when permitted.

Ah! You will say, a Sylvan scene, but apart from the driving mandrels has this to do with phonographs?

Well, it is a kind of curtain-raiser, for downstairs (little boys must not touch) was a brand new 2-minute Edison photograph with a three-foot brass horn.

Jack Baker, the decorator from next door, was in and had added a Pathé of Harry Lauder singing "Stop Your Tickling Jock" to the slowly growing collection.

Dear old Jack has been gone many years but those with sharp eyes and travelling by Met from Dollis Hill to Willesden will see on the back of one of the houses, (No. 23 Chapter Road), "J. Baker, Painter and Decorator". Anyway, it was still there last week, and, reverting to Beyer-Peacocks, old No. 23 was still at Neasden Works nearby for the Centenary Celebrations as the 25th. May this year, still with her 5' 9" mandrels.

1905, and a move of about 1½ miles north-east to Cricklewood.

Here my father opened a sweet and tobacco shop, on a corner facing a main road and a side road. Reverse the letter L and turn it upside down, the northern arm was tobacco and the eastern, sweets.

At the angle was a flap leading to the domestic quarters and slightly to the left of the flap, stood the Edison Standard Phonograph already mentioned, this time with a four-foot brass horn supported on a floor crane, similar to a violinist's music desk.

Nearby was another railway. This time the Midlands main line, where Johnson's magnificent engines still bore the brunt of the Manchester expresses. This route takes you through the lovely Chevin Valley near Duffield and quite a rural approach to Manchester. On the

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hand, local traffic was still handled by the Kirtley tanks, which with their tall chimneys, Salter valves in the dome and all the mandrel springs exposed, looked for all the world like Hedgehogs.

To revert to the shop, in addition to the confectionery and tobacco; ice cream and minerals were available in the summer, hot cordials in the winter and two minute cylinders all the year round.

These records came mainly from Jacques in Praed Street, Paddington and from Phillips' pianos in Kilburn, both of whom were Edison factors. This brings me to motor buses. Three operated from Cricklewood:-

1. The London General Omnibus Company painted with yellow waists, known as the 'Generals',
2. The London Motor Omnibus Company, the 'Vanguards' which were a dark gun-metal colour.
3. 'Pioneers' manufactured by Scott-Sterlings. Two of these services No. 1. and No. 16 exist today, although No. 1. starts from Willesden. The fare was 3d. from Cricklewood to Victoria.

Quite the best sellers in cylinders was Arthur Collins' "Any rags, any bones, any bottles today?" Others were:-

"In the valley where the bluebirds sing" (Edison)

"Where the sunset turns the ocean's blue to gold" (Edison)

"The Bells of St. Malo" (Columbia and Edison)

"The Lost Chord" (cornet solo- Columbia)

"Cock o' the North" - Pipe Major Forsyth (Edison Bell)

"Algonquin March" and "American Patrol" (Sterling)

"Morning, noon and night" - Edison Concert Band (Edison)

"Liberty Bell" - Edison Military Band (Edison)

"Waiting at the Church" - Ada Jones (Edison).

Banal, some might say. Well, I shall have something to say about this in the future.

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THUMB NAIL SKETCHES BY TYN PHOIL

No. 9.

Edison Blue Amberol 1711. Manhattan Beach and El Capitan

Marches by John Philip Sousa and his Band.

I suppose these are two of the most famous marches of all time and owners of this cylinder have what is denied to most moderns - a creator's performance by the band under its celebrated conductor.

J. P. Sousa was born in Washington in 1856 and in 1877 joined Offenbach's Orchestra as a violinist. In 1880, he took over and reorganised the band of the United States Marine Corps and laid the foundation, so ably carried on by the Santelmans, father and son, to make the band, known today as the United States Marine Band, one of the finest in the world. One further note about Sousa. When he performed with his band at the Empire, Leicester Square, London, the "Ladies" of the Promenade complained that the volume of the band made business difficult - or so the story goes!

* * * * *

PET'S CORNER: "Hey, Waiter, this steak is burnt black".

"Yes, sir, a mark of respect; our head waiter died yesterday"
Edi-smile.

The Grossmiths (continued)

In 'Tonight's the Night', Grossmith and Haidee de Rance sang Jerome Kern's "They didn't believe me" which is usually considered to be a more modern song. Grossmith was also in reviews such as 'The Bing Boys' and 'The Cabaret Girl'.

Latterly he was associated with Edward Laurillard in the management of London theatres.

Of course, mention of the Gaiety conjurs up memories of Gertie Millar, Edmund Payne, Lionel Monckton, George Edwardes, etc., etc. . . . but that is another story.

Mention must be made here of Weedon Grossmith, 1852 - 1919, brother of George three, who first appeared at Liverpool in 1885 and remained a famous 'straight' actor until 1917. He played with such eminent people as Irving and Alexander. He was also an excellent painter who exhibited at the Royal Academy.

Books to read. George Grossmith (three) 'A Society Clown', 1888

'Piano and I', 1910

Weedon Grossmith 'From Studio to Stage', 1913

Geo & Weedon Grossmith 'The Diary of a Nobody', 1894

(a cheap edition still in print at Collins)

George Grossmith (four) 'G.G.', 1933

S. Naylor 'Gaiety and George Grossmith', 1913.

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THE SAD FATE OF SOME OF THE LONDON HALLS

by David Bayley

Of course, many halls have disappeared completely already. Some still exist as cinemas, T.V. studios, bingo and wrestling halls. There are, however, a number of other once-popular and important halls still in existence, BUT, it seems, within about a year probably all of these will have gone for ever, for instance -

COLLINS MUSIC HALL known as the world's oldest hall was still running shows of sorts up to 1958 when there was a disastrous fire. Now everything is gone except the front of the building. Showrooms are being built at the back.

THE METROPOLITAN, Edgware Road, was as famous as any other and had a pleasing interior. It is being demolished this month for road-widening.

THE BEDFORD, Camden Town, was an extremely popular hall, and known as the rowdiest in England. It had beautiful plaster-work inside. It was large but intimate. It will be demolished soon to make way for a super-market.

THE STAR, Abbey Street, Bermondsey, is a plain but well-designed hall a hundred years old. It is now filthy and derelict, but was a cinema between the wars. Marie Lloyd made some of her first appearances there. It is to be demolished very soon.

THE WASHINGTON, York Road, Battersea, was where Eugene Stratton tried out his songs. It was a cinema until recently. Flats are to take its place.

THE CAMBERWELL PALACE lies idle and neglected, only the haunt of birds.

SOME FURTHER NOTES ON BILLY WILLIAMS

Extracted from the American 'Variety' Annual by Leslie Kaye.

Perhaps the most underpaid celebrity, but the one who got the sweetest revenge was Billy Williams. He was the "Man in the Velvet Suit" who became an idol of the Halls.

Some of the Edison old-timers like to tell how when Williams came to England from Australia, he was so eager to find some way of attracting attention that he agreed to make Edison cylinders exclusively for about £2 - 10s. each. His first, "John, John, put your trousers on", was such a hit that it brought him all sort of well-paid engagements on the Halls.

(Editor's note: There seems to be a discrepancy, for whereas Billy Williams came to London in 1901, he began making cylinders and discs in 1907).

Naturally, Edison wanted lots more of Williams' cylinders and naturally Williams wanted a new contract with more money. The Company's business manager, a hard headed American business man, refused to alter the figures and held Williams to his three-year contract. He said that the records had been the artist's making.

Williams felt somewhat bitter until a friend pointed out that his contract was exclusive for cylinders only - he could make as many discs as he liked. So the 'Man from Down-Under' began to sing for all the disc factories and became the hottest thing on records.

When the Edison contract was expired, the B.M. tried to renew it at the old £2 - 10s. Then with fluent profanity, Mr. Williams told him a few things. While the B.M. quivered in agony, Williams said that he would go on making Edison cylinders, but on his own terms.

First: When the day of recording arrived, he would come along at any hour he chose, but he would expect a well-rehearsed orchestra waiting from 8 a.m. Second: He would sing each song only once for a far greater fee. Third: "I never make mistakes," Williams said, "but if the orchestra blows up during the take, I'll do another - for another fee! Every time I sing a song twice through no fault of my own, you'll pay me again. Take it or leave it!"

It was bitter medicine, but the business manager felt that Edison must have Billy Williams records, so he took it.

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A VISIT TO THE PAST by LESLIE KAYE

As you may know, there is now a permanent "British Music Hall" Museum at the home of Mr. Ray Mackender of 'The Studio', London, W.1.

I had the great pleasure to visit the Museum recently and with a warm welcome that would be accorded to anyone going to arrange an appointment, found a truly wonderful collection of history of the 'halls'. In fact, right from the front door with its selection of posters one is greatly impressed with its scope. There are music sheets from before the turn of the century, photos, contracts, books, magazines, etc., etc. There are all types of gramophone records. It is good to see that at long last a serious effort is being made to accumulate this memorial to the great popular artists of the past - for the enjoyment of all. Anyone having items to spare can be assured of its grateful inclusion into the collection.

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The 'Hillandale News' is the official magazine of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society. Secretarial & Editorial address - 19, Glendale Road, Bournemouth, England.